

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 03469 021512Z  
ACTION INR-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 /018 W  
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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3335  
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3469

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINR, SY  
SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCH OF  
ANTIOCH ELIAS IV

REF: DAMASCUS 3070

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. ACCORDING TO BROCHURES ISSUED BY THE CHURCH'S NORTH AMERICAN ARCHDIOCESE (WILL POUCH COPIES), PATRIARCH ELIAS IV WAS BORN IN 1914. HE RECEIVED HIS PRIMARY EDUCATION AT THE MONASTERY OF SAINT GEORGE AL-HARF AND HIS SECONDARY EDUCATION AT ORTHODOX SCHOOLS IN HOMS AND DAMASCUS. IN 1927 HE WAS ADMITTED TO THE CHURCH'S MONASTIC ORDER. IN 1934 HE WAS SENT TO THE HALKI THEOLOGICAL ACADEMY OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND GRADUATED WITH THE LICENTATE IN THEOLOGY IN 1939. HE WAS APPOINTED DEAN OF THE BALAMAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN LEBANON, AND IN 1941 HE WAS ORDAINED A PRIEST AND ELEVATED TO THE RANK OF ARCHIMANDRITE. AFTERWARDS, HE TAUGHT ARABIC LITERATURE AT THE ORTHODOX COLLEGE OF ASSIYAT IN DAMASCUS. HE WAS ASSIGNED AS PRIEST IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL UNTIL HIS ELECTION AS BISHOP OF METROPOLITAN SEE OF ALEPPO, SYRIA IN 1950. HE REMAINED METROPOLITAN OF THE ALEPPO DISTRICT UNTIL SEPTEMBER 25, 1970 WHEN HE WAS ELECTED  
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PATRIARCH BY THE HOLY SYNOD (COLLEGE OF BISHOPS).

2. SINCE BECOMING PATRIARCH, HE HAS VISITED THE PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW TWICE IN 1972 AND 1974 AND ALSO VISITED ORTHODOX CHURCHES OF ROMANIA, BULGARIA, AND GREECE (TWICE). HE WAS THE FIRST CHRISTIAN LEADER TO ATTEND AND ADDRESS THE PAN ISLAMIC SUMMIT IN LAHORE,

PAKISTAN IN FEBRUARY 1974. IN MAY 1975 HE WAS ALSO THE FIRST CHRISTIAN LEADER TO BE RECEIVED BY A KIN OF SAUDI ARABIA--KING KHALID IN JIDA WHO GRANTED THE CHURCH PERMISSION TO ESTABLISH ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE KINGDOM.

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3. DURING THE MID TO LATE 1960'S THE CHURCH WAS IN TURMOIL AS PRO-RUSSIAN FACTION OF BISHOPS WITH THE SUPPORT OF MUCH OF THE THEN BAATH LEADERSHIP AND THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ATTEMPTED TO ENGINEER MAJORITY OF PRO-RUSSIAN BISHOPS IN THE HOLY SYNOD IN ORDER TO ASSURE ELECTION OF ONE OF THEIR OWN TO THE PATRIARCHATE. KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCE ON THIS PERIOD TOLD EMBOFF THAT ELIAS, WHO WAS THEN BISHOP OF ALEPPO, WAS ONE OF PRO-WEST BISHOPS WHO PLAYED LEADING ROLE IN THWARTING THIS GROUP WITH ENCOURAGEMENT FROM HIS FRIEND HAFEZ AL-ASSAD WHO WAS THEN MINDEF. AS RESULT, OVERWHELMING NUMBER OF CHURCH'S BISHOPS TODAY ARE PRO-EST.

4. PATRIARCH ELIAS HAS SYMPATHY FOR BOTH PAN-SYRIAN AND ARAB NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND IS CRITICAL OF LEBANESE CHRISTIANS WHO ADVOCATE PARTITION (SEE REFTEL). HE MAINTAINS REGULAR CONTACTS WITH THE SYRIAN-NATIONALIST PPS. HE IS ANXIOUS TO HAVE US PLAY MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN RESOLVING THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT AND IS CONCERNED THAT IF PROGRESS NOT MADE RADICAL REGIMES WILL AGAIN COME TO POWER IN SYRIA AND ELSEWHERE IN THE REGION.

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5. THE PATRIARCH HAS FAIRLY GOOD ENGLISH COMPREHENSION BUT DOES NOT SPEAK THE LANGUAGE FLUENTLY AND SHOULD HAVE A TRANSLATOR.  
MURPHY

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
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